

VZCZCXRO2186  
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA  
DE RUEHNM #0048/01 0192017  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 192017Z JAN 10  
FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5578  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NIAMEY 000048

DEPT FOR AF/W AND AF/RSA  
USAID FOR AFR/W  
ACCRA ALSO FOR USAID/WA  
PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [NG](#)

SUBJECT: Niger: ECOWAS Mediator Proposes Road Map for Niger;  
Government and Opposition Respond

Ref: a) Niamey 0029, b) 09 Niamey 1025, c) 09 Niamey 1005

¶1. Summary: On January 14, weeks after the pro-Government and the opposition delegations to the Inter-Nigerien Political Dialogue (INPD) submitted their positions (refs A and B), ECOWAS Mediator Abdusalami Abubakar presented his suggestions for a way out of Niger's political crisis. In response, Niger's main opposition group, the Coordination of Forces for Democracy and the Republic (CFDR), issued a statement accusing the Government of Niger (GON) of manipulating the mediator and delaying talks in order to undermine the negotiations. The GON rejected the CFDR's accusations as groundless. End summary.

ECOWAS Mediator Proposes Transitional Government

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¶2. On January 14, ECOWAS Mediator retired General and former Nigerian Head of State Abdusalami Abubakar met separately with INPD protagonists and provided them with a memorandum detailing his conclusions and suggestions for a way forward. He requested that each delegation forward written responses to him by January 26. The Mediator adjourned the INPD until February 3. (Note: Abubakar was summoned to Sudan to help mediate the conflict in Darfur. End note.)  
The Mediators' proposal is as follows:

(Begin text)

-- The Dialogue shall establish an Interim National Reconciliation Government (INRG) or a National Reconciliation Government (NRG) for a period to be determined by the Dialogue;

-- Consensus provisions shall be adopted in order to govern during the period;

-- His Excellency President Mamadou Tandja shall remain in office until the end of the period in compliance with this Agreement;

-- The Government shall be led by a technocrat appointed by consensus. The Government shall comprise representatives selected by the Dialogue;

-- The Government shall ensure daily operation of State affairs in compliance with this Agreement;

-- The National Council for Political Dialogue shall be reinstated and remain in continuous consultation with the National Assembly. The Council shall make recommendations to the Government concerning a schedule for elections;

-- The Government shall be responsible for setting up a schedule for elections, the effective completion of which shall mean the end of the Interim National Reconciliation Government. These processes shall be conducted under the supervision of an Independent National Electoral Commission created by consensus;

-- Within the framework of the reconciliation, the National Assembly shall be increased to 160 members in order to ensure the CFDR's representation; and

-- The amnesty granted by the government for political violations committed before the Dialogue shall remain valid after the Dialogue.

(End text)

#### CFDR Slams Government for Delays, Expresses Skepticism

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13. On January 17, the CFDR issued a statement in response to the ECOWAS-proposed road map and the suspension of the INPD. The CFDR accused the GON of using a variety of delaying tactics that forced the Mediator to allow "repeated suspensions and restricted meetings." The CFDR stated that it conceded to the creation of a consensus and inclusive transitional government that would draft a new constitution and organize new elections. According to the CFDR, President Tandja's New Year's greetings of state institutions and the diplomatic corps clearly showed that "President Tandja and his zealots had never hidden their hostility to dialogue and their intention to give no chance to its success."

14. The CFDR went on to say that it would convey its proposals as requested by the Mediator, but asked Nigeriens to have "no illusions as to the outcome of this Dialogue, which, in truth, has never taken place" and called on supporters of democracy to "prepare for a resolute and determined struggle in order to defeat President Tandja's projects..." The CFDR further stated that "...in addition to being solely responsible for engaging the country in a crisis, President Tandja, by his stubbornness, autism, and carelessness for

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the country's peace and stability, is the only responsible for the failure of the Dialogue wished by the international community and supported by the majority of Nigeriens."

#### GON Rejects Opposition's Claims as Groundless

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15. January 17, the GON via the Minister of Communication and Government Spokesperson Moctar Kassoum declared the opposition's statement as "untimely and irresponsible." Kassoum stated, "One cannot put words into the Government's mouth while it had not yet responded to the road map that the Mediator proposed to the two parties." According to him, the CFDR's statement reveals the opposition's niche for "subversion, denouncement, and perfidy, often in complicity with certain foreign forces." The Minister assured that "the Government will make every effort so the Inter-Nigerien Dialogue can achieve reasonable results. Likewise, democracy will be protected and sustained...The Government is analyzing the Mediator's proposals for a way out of the crisis, and will respond responsibly, that is, to preserve the nation's and the population's interests." He further stated that "nothing will be done outside the framework of the Sixth Republic."

#### Comment

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16. It appears that the Mediator's proposal regarding the expansion of National Assembly membership was not derived from the proposals of the two delegations (refs A and B). In fact, the ECOWAS Mediator met individually with President Tandja on January 11 to seek his approval of the proposals made to both parties. According to Embassy contacts, President Tandja told the Mediator that he would not concede anything regarding the Sixth Republic and deriving institutions - a position reiterated by the GON Spokesperson on January 17. Instead, President Tandja offered to expand the National Assembly, "allotting" 47 seats to the opposition.

17. Many opposition members believe that the above referenced offer further proves that President Tandja does not take negotiations seriously and that he is using such maneuvers to delay further international sanctions while pursuing his plans to consolidate his power. Overall, the Mediator's proposed road map appears to pose a complex exercise designed to result in the protagonists' proposals meeting halfway.

WHITAKER